

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2248

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5425

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, AR

SUBJECT: REACTION TO CABINET CHANGES

REF: BA 5415

SUMMARY. FIRST REACTION TO NAMING OF NEW CABINET HAS BEEN ON BALANCE ONE OF LUKEWARM APPROVAL. WHILE CONSIDERED BETTER THAN OUTGOING VABINET, FEELING IS THAT SHAKEUP DID NOT GO FAR ENOUGH. MOST CONTROVERSIAL APPOINTMENT IS THAT OF COL. VICENTE DAMASCO AS INTERIOR MINISTER. CHOICE OF ROBLEDO MET WITH GENERAL AND ON THE WHOLE ENTHUSIASTIC APPROVAL. MANNER OF SELECTION OF NEW CABINET AND FACT THAT MRS. PERON OBVIOUSLY ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES IN SELECTING PERSON OF STATURE TO FILL ECONOMIC POST CAUSE FOR CONCERN HERE IN POLITICAL CIRCLES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NEW CABINET NAMED BY MRS. PERON ON AUGUST 11 FAILED TO LIVE UP TO ITS ADVANCE BILLING. OVER WEEKEND POLITICAL SOURCES IN BOTH PERONIST AND UCR CIRCLES WERE EXPRESSING HOPE THAT NEW CABINET WOULD BE DRAWN FROM GROUP OF PROMINENT AND RESPECTED PERONISTS WHO COULD BRING SOME MEASURE OF COHERENCE TO GOVERNMENT POLICY AND UNITY TO PARTY. FACT THAT KEY POLITICAL POST, THAT OF INTERIOR MINISTER, GIVEN TO COL. VICENTE DAMASCO, A NON-PERONIST WITH NO INDEPENDENT POLITICAL BASE, WAS DISAPPOINT-
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MENT TO MANY. HOWEVER, DESPITE HIS POLITICAL LIABILITIES,

DAMASCO IS CONSIDERED BY MOST OBSERVERS TO BE A COMPETENT INDIVIDUAL AND LIKELY WILL BE GIVEN SOME ROOM FOR MANEUVER AT LEAST IN HIS FIRST FEW DAYS AS INTERIOR MINISTER.

2. THE APPOINTMENT OF ANGEL ROBLEDO AS FOREIGN MINISTER WAS THE MOST POPULAR APPOINTMENT ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY. MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENT IN PERONIST AND UCR CIRCLES WAS FACT THAT ROBLEDO GIVEN FOREIGN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO RATHER THAN INTERIOR MINISTRY. HE IS CITED BY EMBASSY CONTACTS AS TYPE OF MAN WHO COULD INSPIRE CONFIDENCE IN PRESENT GOVERNMENT. MOST OBSERVERS NOW WONDERING WHETHER AS FOREIGN MINISTER HE WILL BE IN A POSITION TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL AUTHORITY AND POLITICAL UNITY.

3. LATEST CABINET SHAKEUP WAS APPARENTLY ACCOMPLISHED IN CLOSED DOOR MEETINGS AT CASA ROSADA. FACT THAT MRS. PERON AND NEW CABINET MINISTERS DID NOT SOLICIT VIEWS FROM BROAD SPECTRUM OF PERONIST PARTY AND OTHER SECTORS CITED BY MANY AS CONTINUATION OF SAME "CLOSED DOOR" POLICY ON PART OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH WITH RESPECT TO CONGRESS AND POLITICAL PARTIES THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO CURRENT PROBLEMS. INDEED, SOME SOURCES SAY THAT FAILURE TO FILL ECONOMY POSITION YESTERDAY IN PART ATTRIBUTED TO MANNER OF SELECTION. CANDIDATES APPROACHED FOR THE JOB, ACCORDING TO THESE SOURCES, SOUNDED OUT THEIR POLITICAL SUPPORTERS AND WERE TOLD NEW CABINET COULD NOT PRE-SUPPOSE BROAD-BASED POLITICAL SUPPORT AND THEY THEN WITHDREW FROM CONSIDERATION. OF GREAT CONCERN TO SOME WAS FACT THAT ROBLEDO THE "LOGICAL" CHOICE FOR INTERIOR MINISTER, HAD APPARENTLY BEEN REPLACED BY DAMASCO OVER WEEKEND, REINFORCING IMPRESSION THAT MRS. PERON WAS OPEN TO UNDUE INFLUENCE BY THOSE WHO HAD PHYSICAL ACCESS TO HER AT QUINTA, AS FOR EXAMPLE DAMASCO DID.

4. IT IS NOW WIDELY RUMORED HERE THAT CAFIERO, PRESENTLY AMBASSADOR TO EUROPEAN COMMON MARKET, IS ON WAY HOME TO ACCEPT ECONOMIC PORTFOLIO. IF THIS PROVES TO BE THE CASE, HIS APPOINTMENT WILL BE MET WITH WIDESPREAD APPROVAL AND WILL STRENGTHEN POLITICAL BASE OF NEW CABINET. FURTHER ANALYSIS WILL FOLLOW BY SEPTEL ASAP.

COMMENT: WHILE NEW MINISTERS HAVE NOT INDICATED POLICY DIRECTION
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TIONS THEY INTEND TO PURSUE, THEY WILL HAVE TO MOVE QUICKLY TO DEAL WITH COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ILLS. LEVEL OF PUBLIC HOSTILITY TO LACK OF GOA ACTION GROWING AND TALK OF POSSIBLE MILITARY MOVE IN EVENT CABINET FAILS NOW COMMONPLACE.
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